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Debra P Tous 09/27/2006 10:21:58 AM From DB/Inbox: Debra P Tous

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Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 05874

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CXBKKSVR:
ACTION: POL
INFO: DAO DATTLO DCM ECON JTF JUSMAG NAS PA RMA SA
TSA RSO AMB CHRON CONS

DISSEMINATION: POL1
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:BOYCERL
DRAFTED: POL:WILSONTN,POL: LA
CLEARED: DCM: ARVIZU, POL: SUTTONSM

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1856
INFO RUEHVS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1185
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2127
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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RUCPDOE/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005874

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: THAILAND UPDATE: CONTINUED CALM; THAKSIN TAKES A
BREAK

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RALPH L. BOYCE. REASON 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Council for Democratic Reform under the Monarchy (CDRM) lowered its media profile on September 22 as efforts to set up an interim civilian government intensified. Several key security portfolios at the sub-ministerial level have been shuffled. Thaksin released a statement from his London retreat suggesting that he would take "a deserved rest" and urging a new general election. The ousted PM's wife and two of his children are reportedly in Bangkok and never left the country as was previously reported. Former Deputy PM and UNSG candidate Surakiart Sathirathai returned to Bangkok and immediately began to distance himself from Thaksin and cozy up to the CDRM. Most key Thaksin allies appear to be under CDRM control. At least one small counter-coup demonstration was held. End Summary.

BANGKOK NORMAL

¶2. (C) Life in Bangkok continued to normalize on September 22. Troops remain posted at several key locations downtown and the CDRM publicly announced that several unit rotations would be under way over the weekend. Traffic returned to its usual snarled format. There was rising press speculation on who would be chosen to lead the new, interim government.

Names of a number of well-respected technocrats, including UNCTAD SecGen Supachai Panitchpakdi--a former Democrat party leader--are being bandied about.

13. (C) At lower levels, several key security positions appear to be shifting, with National Intelligence Director Jumphon Manmai being replaced by Armed Forces Security Center Director Gen.Waipot Srinual (a good embassy contact). Police General Priewphan Damapong, Thaksin's brother-in-law and Deputy Commissioner General was shifted to an administrative post. Gen Winai Thongsong--Thaksin's nephew and commander of the Royal Thai Police Criminal Suppression Division (CSD) -- was moved to a desk job as well. (CSD is a Bangkok based service with wide ranging authority and relatively important paramilitary capability. We understand that the military took control of their offices during the coup, although it did not occupy the offices of other police units.)

14. (C) Work on the interim constitution appears to be under way. Local press reports that former Senate Speaker Meechai Ruchuphan and former secretary general to the cabinet Borwornsak Uwanno are being enlisted by the CDRM to begin drafting the interim constitution. They are two of the most highly respected jurists in the country. In a lunch meeting on September 22, MFA contacts told us that both Meechai and Borwornsak are already at work on the document, which is expected to be a simplified version of the recently suspended 1997 constitution. Our contacts told us that the CDRM had also approached former Deputy PM Wissanu Krea-Ngam -- once a strong Thaksin supporter but respected legal authority -- to help with the drafting.

THAKSIN'S STATEMENT

15. (C) Thaksin remains in London. His close adviser Pansak Vinyaratn told reporters on Thursday that the ousted PM will "as of now, take a deserved rest" and looks forward to involving himself in charity work. When asked in what matter Pansak said, "you have to think what is the most effective charitable work, something like development of the economy, not rocket science." Pansak did not explain when Thaksin plans to return to Thailand but told reporters that the ousted premier may travel elsewhere in Europe. Thaksin's traveling party released the following statement.

Full text of Thaksin statement:

The event in Thailand during the last two days should not detract from my main aim of national reconciliation. Therefore, he (sic) would like to urge all parties to find ways and means to reconcile and work towards national reconciliation for the sake of our King and country. We hope the new regime will quickly arrange a new general election and continue to uphold the principles of democracy for the future of all Thais.

End Text.

THAKSIN'S FAMILY IN BANGKOK

16. (C) Meanwhile, press reports that Thaksin's wife Pochaman and two of his children had fled for Singapore during the coup appear to have been part of a calculated disinformation campaign. Embassy contacts reported early on September 22 that Pochaman, son Panthongtae and daughter Paethongthan returned to their residence Friday, after two nights in a local safehouse.

I FOR ONE WELCOME OUR NEW ARMY OVERLORDS

17. (C) Former Deputy Prime Minister and candidate for UN Secretary General Surakiart Sathirathai returned to Bangkok

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Wednesday and immediately began to shed his ties to the ousted PM. Telling reporters that he thanked the CDRM for their support for his UNSG candidacy, he denied having talked to Thaksin in New York about the coup. Local media had a field day in contrasting these comments with Surakiart's live statement to CNN on Tuesday night, when he strongly defended Thaksin and suggested that the coup was faltering.

DETAINEES

18. (C) It remains unclear precisely how many people have been detained by the CDRM, but the number appears to be low thus far. The most prominent detainees are former DPM Chidchai Wannasathit, Thaksin's former Secretary General Prommin Lertsuridej, former PM office Minister Newin Chidchob and former Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Yongyuth Tiypairat. Chidchai and Prommin are reportedly being held at Supreme Command Headquarters. Newin and Yongyuth turned themselves in at the Army Headquarters on September 21. Prommin, Newin and Yongyuth were widely believed to have been prominent hard-liners in the TRT camp who urged Thaksin to hold fast to his defiant stance.

19. (C) Political activists Charat Worachath and Tavee Kaikub were briefly detained on September 20 after protesting the coup at Bangkok's Democracy Monument. Both were subsequently released. A CDRM spokesperson stated that two Thaksin loyalists, Senator-designate Samak Sundaravej and ex-Senator Dusit Siriwan were detained briefly on September 19 but have since been released. The CDRM spokesman confirmed that all four men remain under close surveillance.

COUNTER-COUP?

10. (C) Former Defense Minister Thammarak Issarangkul Na Ayyuthaya is the most senior Thaksin ally still at large, and is rumored to have fled to the northern part of Thailand. A Chinese journalist contact cited rumors circulating on Friday that Thammarak may be organizing Thaksin supporters in the hinterland into a "grassroots militia." We have nothing to substantiate this rumor, however.

TESTING THE WATERS--AN ANTI-COUP DEMONSTRATION

11. (C) A demonstration was announced by the "19 September Network against Coup d'etat" on their website (which has subsequently been blocked) to be held at 18:00 local time on September 22 at an upscale shopping mall. At COB, we had reports from poloff on the scene and NGO contacts indicating that a small demonstration was ongoing, and a very large group of journalists was present to cover it. Police were also present, but had not taken measures to halt the demonstration as of COB.

BOYCE